What is claimed is:

1. An information delivery system comprising:

an Internet-connected host server adapted to compile information from information sources and deliver the information as electronic documents via the Internet;

a subscriber's Internet Appliance (IA) connected to the Internet and adapted to download the text documents from the Internet-connected server; and

a playback unit connectable to the subscriber's IA by a data link;

wherein the playback unit is adapted to receive and store the electronic documents while connected to the subscriber's computer, and to render the electronic documents as speech on demand when not connected to the subscriber's computer.

2. The information delivery system of claim 1 wherein the information is sent to the host server from the information sources over one or more data links.

3. The information delivery system of claim 2 wherein the electronic documents are delivered from the information sources to the host server over the Internet.

4. The information delivery system of claim 1 wherein the host server is adapted to store subscriber preferences and to sort information for delivery to subscribers according to the preferences.

5. The information delivery system of claim 1 wherein the host server is adapted to code electronic documents delivered to a subscriber in a manner to control audio characteristics including inflection as the text documents are rendered as speech in the playback unit.

6. The information delivery system of claim 1 further comprising a radio broadcast system coupled to the host server and a radio receiving unit in the playback unit, the broadcast system and receiving unit adapted to update information according to subscriber preferences in the playback unit with the playback unit disconnected from the subscriber's IA.

7. The information delivery system of claim 4 wherein the host server is adapted to adjust stored subscriber preferences according to subscriber use patterns.

8. A portable playback unit comprising:

a data port for connecting to an Internet Appliance (IA);

a memory for storing text documents downloaded from the IA via the data port;

a speaker; and

a text-to-speech system adapted to open electronic documents downloaded from the IA, and to render the electronic documents as speech via the speaker.

9. The portable playback unit of claim 8 comprising user inputs for controlling selection of documents for playback, and start and stop functions for playback.

10. The portable playback unit of claim 8 further comprising a radio antenna and receiving circuitry, wherein the unit is adapted to receive electronic documents by radio to be stored and later rendered as speech.

11. The portable playback unit of claim 8 further comprising an LCD display adapted to display control functions for operating the playback unit.

12. The portable playback unit of claim 8 further comprising a battery and recharge circuitry, the battery adapted to provide electrical power to the playback unit disconnected from the IA and the recharge circuit adapted to recharge the battery with the unit connected to the IA.

13. A method for providing filtered information to a subscriber, comprising steps of:

(a) collecting information at an Internet-connected server from plural information sources;

(b) sorting the information according to subscriber preferences;

(c) sending information sorted for a specific subscriber as electronic documents to that subscriber's Internet Appliance (IA) via the Internet;

(d) downloading the electronic documents from the subscriber's IA to a connected playback device; and

(e) disconnecting the playback device from the IA; and

(f) playing back the electronic documents to a speaker at the playback device by a text-to-speech system.

14. The method of claim 13 further comprising a step for coding the text in an electronic document at the Internet-connected server in a manner to control speech characteristics, including inflection, during text-to-speech rendition at the playback device.

15. The method of claim 13 including a step for sending electronic document updates from the Internet-connected server by radio transmitter, and for receiving electronic document updates at the playback device by radio receiver, with the playback device disconnected from the subscriber's IA.